



City of Santa Barbara
Community Development, Housing & Redevelopment Division

Memorandum

DATE: February 23, 2011

TO: Development Application Review Team

FROM: Elizabeth Limón, Redevelopment Specialist
Marck Aguilar, Redevelopment Supervisor

SUBJECT: Plaza De La Guerra Infrastructure Improvement Project
(APN 037-092-037 & MST 2007-00496)

DART Review Request

We are pleased to submit the 2011 Proposed Plan for the Plaza De la Guerra Improvement Project to City Staff for review.¹ This Applicant Letter and Attachments, along with the Master Application, provide with a few exceptions all the information necessary to meet the submittal requirements for a DART review based on the City's *Planning Commission Submittal Packet* handout on the City's website. In the case of the exceptions, this Applicant Letter will explain why some information has not been provided at this point in time.

We look forward to hearing staff input from the various departments involved in the Development Application Review Team (DART) process. This application involves a City park and we respectfully request that the Parks & Recreation Department Staff also participate in the DART review for this project. Since the proposed project involves grading as well as replacing and upgrading utilities in the Plaza, we also request that DART be expanded to include the Engineering Division, Water Resources, Wastewater Resources and the Streets Division of the Public Works Department.

Project Goals / Agency Board Direction

As noted below, the Agency Board's direction to Staff in November 2009 was to find a design that would both "keep the Plaza the same while making it better." Attachment 1 is a photo that provides an example of the existing condition of the infrastructure in the Plaza, which are also recorded on Sheet 2 of Attachment 2. This photo is taken from in front of the News-Press building looking towards Casa de la Guerra. The roadway throughout the U-road is a patch work of concrete and asphalt which would be repaved. As part of the infrastructure improvement project, the fire hydrant and storm drain would

¹ Please note up front that, while our project is called "Plaza de la Guerra" many of the Planning, Design Review and Street files are filed under "D" for "De la Guerra Plaza."

be upgraded to current standards. Also, the tented electrical panel shown in the photo will be re-located off of the main Plaza area. We believe these infrastructure improvements will benefit the public who frequent the Plaza and U-Road as well as the Plaza Special Events and Users Groups. The proposed project would also reduce maintenance costs for the Parks and Recreation Department.

The Redevelopment Agency has hired the firm of Campbell & Campbell (Architects, Landscape Architects and Planners) to develop the preliminary design. They have teamed with Penfield and Smith Engineers for this project. Attached are the revised 2011 conceptual plans. These plans have been prepared specifically for the DART review of the Plaza De La Guerra Infrastructure Improvement Project (Attachment 2). Attachments 3 and 4 provide detailed responses to the PRT comments. Attachment 3 is the PRT letter with Applicant Responses incorporated into the text of the letter for DART review. This makes it easy to see how the project has been revised in response to PRT comments. Similarly, Attachment 4 provides responses to 2008 Engineering Division comments.

Recent Project History

Please see Attachment 5 for a complete description of recent project history (2007-2010). In November 2009, the City Council & Agency Board reviewed a conceptual design for improvements to Plaza de la Guerra. The conceptual design was declared a project for environmental review and directed Staff to enter into a contract with Campbell & Campbell (Architects, Landscape Architects and Planners) to prepare more detailed plans for preliminary planning and design review.

In 2010, technical studies were conducted related to Historic Site & Structures and Archeological Resources. The project was also submitted for the Pre-Application Review Team (PRT) process. Based on the findings of the technical studies and Staff input through the PRT process, the project was revised. The revised project is simpler, yet still:

- Meets the Council's desire to improve the Plaza while maintaining its character,
- Addresses Council's charge for "safe interaction between pedestrians and automobiles,"
- Addresses concerns expressed by the local business community through the Downtown Organization, and
- Improves the connectivity between Storke Placita, Plaza De la Guerra and Casa De la Guerra.

This 2011 simplified plan is now being submitted for DART review.

The discretionary approvals requested include:

- CEQA Review – EIR Certification by the Planning Commission
- Parks & Recreation Commission Approvals (Park land & P-R Zone)
- Historic Landmarks Commission Preliminary and Final Approvals

The Applicant anticipates getting input and recommendations from the Street Tree Advisory Committee and the Transportation and Circulation Committee. Additional input is expected from the Downtown Organization, the Trust for Historic Preservation, Plaza User Groups surrounding property owners and businesses and the general public.

2011 Conceptual Plan for Plaza De La Guerra – Project Description

The project is located in Downtown Santa Barbara in the block bounded by State, De la Guerra, Anacapa and Ortega Streets. This City owned property was designated as a public plaza / parkland by City Council in 1855. The project area includes the Plaza lawn area as well as the U-road and sidewalks surrounding the lawn area. (See Attachment 2 – Sheet 6 of 9). The project area is approximately .47 acres in size. The plaza / lawn area, is zoned P-R. The roadway and sidewalks are zoned C-2.

The project area is surrounded by City Hall, City Hall employee parking lot, Santa Barbara News-Press parking lot, the Santa Barbara News-Press Building, Storke Placita, and the back of stores, shops, restaurants and offices that front on State Street. Directly across De la Guerra Street from the Plaza is Casa de la Guerra. Casa de la Guerra is a City Landmark, a California State Landmark, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The City Hall and Pepper Tree are also designated City Landmarks.

The 2011 conceptual plan is a starting point to begin the design / environmental review process. Some of the key elements of the 2011 conceptual plan include:

Lowering Main Plaza Lawn Area – The 2010 conceptual plan proposed to raise the U-Road to be flush with the Plaza lawn area. This concept was analyzed in the PRT process and in the Historic Structures Report prepared by Post Hazeltine. Based on this input, the project has been revised and the proposal to raise the U-Road grade has been dropped.

The U-Road will remain at the current grade. A standard raised curb will be retained on the outside of the loop road. A new feature proposes to lower the Plaza lawn area to be flush with the roadway. Removable bollards and truncated domes would be necessary and therefore included on the interior of the loop road (Attachment 2, Sheet 6 of 9, Proposed Features Plan). This design greatly facilitates drainage and storm water capture in the project area and results in a simpler design that is more in keeping with the historic layout and function of the Plaza.

During special events, when the U-road is closed, the bollards along the interior loop could be temporarily removed to provide more unobstructed space for activities curb-to-curb for the Plaza main area. The bollards are illustrated on the proposed cross sections (Sheets 8 and 9 of Attachment 2). The bollards would be approximately 18 inches in diameter, and approximately 30 inches high.

Project Materials – U-road, sidewalks, crosswalks and a portion of De la Guerra Street would be resurfaced with a consistent concrete paving with an historic finish scoring pattern.

Note: This material selection is supported by the City Administrator and Assistant City Administrator with the condition that the design minimize potential future need to penetrate the concrete road surface for repairs by relocating utility laterals, meters, vaults, etc. outside of the U-road, to the extent feasible.

ADA Requirements – To comply with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, in addition to the bollards, an ADA compliant detectable warning band would be necessary to alert the visually-impaired that they are transitioning from a pedestrian lawn area to a vehicle pathway. As shown on the 2011 plans, a strip of truncated pavers would be placed around the interior area where the lawn transitions into the roadway.

Parking & Circulation – Currently, there are 35 on-street parking spaces around the Plaza U-Road and 23 spaces along De la Guerra Street for a total of 58 on-street parking spaces in the project area. The proposed project would result in a net loss of five (5) curbside parking spaces in the U-Road and a net increase of one (1) parking space along De la Guerra Street. The existing and proposed parking spaces are illustrated on Sheet 7 of 9 in Attachment 2. The sheet includes a breakdown of spaces by area as well as parking type (loading, time limit, accessibility).

The net loss of parking in the Plaza is a result of removing two 75-minute spaces at the U-Road exit near the California Pepper Tree. This would improve the substandard road width for emergency vehicle access/egress near the Pepper Tree. Three 15-minute spaces are also proposed to be removed near Storke Placita to improve the pedestrian & visual connection to/from State Street (Sheet 7 of 9, Attachment 2).

Pedestrian Amenities – The proposed project would widen that sidewalk area on the western (State Street) side of the Plaza by approximately 4.5 feet. This would create a consistent sidewalk of approximately 9 feet along the back side of these State Street shops and restaurants. The existing sidewalks and curbs on City property along the southerly arc of the plaza in front of the News-Press building would be replaced. No improvements are proposed on News-Press property. The sidewalks in front of City Hall may be replaced depending on final design issues and efforts to increase protection of the historic Pepper tree. New crosswalks would be provided across De la Guerra Street at the U-Road entry and exit as well as at Storke Placita and at the southeasterly end of the U-road. This would emphasize and encourage the Placita connection to State Street. These new crosswalks are shown on Sheet 6 of 9 (Proposed Features Plan).

Utilities & Electrical Service Panel – To upgrade utilities in the Plaza, a new trenched utility corridor would be created around the interior Plaza lawn area. Utilities provided would include electrical, gas, water and sewer lines and to improve drainage (Sheet 5 of 9 – Proposed Utility Plan – Attachment 2). The utility corridor trench would be 4 feet in width and 4 feet deep. The existing electrical panel is proposed to be relocated out of the main Plaza lawn area to the southwest corner of the City Hall building. The existing utilities would be removed or abandoned in place (Sheet 3 of 9 – Demolition Plan). To the extent feasible, lateral connections would be located underneath sidewalks or in areas where future disruption to the concrete roadway with historic finish would be minimized.

Tree Replacement - Due to the age and poor condition of the existing palm trees in the Plaza, the project proposes to replace, rather than relocate, the existing trees. This would result in younger trees that would be expected to live longer into the future than the existing mature palms. Measures would be taken to protect the Historic California Pepper Tree in front of City Hall.

The proposed landscape plan is illustrated on Sheet 6 of 9 Attachment 2 – Proposed Features Plan). As can be seen in the legend, the Proposed Features Plan identifies the existing Queen Palms that would be replaced and the one existing Fan Palm Tree that would remain. Until recently, a second Fan Palm Tree also existed in the Plaza. The two Fan Palm Trees were planted in 1910 to remind us of the location of the original City Hall in Plaza De La Guerra. The project would replace the second Fan Palm in the original location.

During a concept review with the Street Tree Advisory Committee (June 10, 2010), it was suggested that the replacement palms be clustered to increase opportunities for shade in the Plaza. This suggestion has been incorporated into the 2011 concept plan submitted for DART review as shown on Sheet 6 of Attachment 2.

Landscaping – The project proposes to remove the planting area (agapanthus) adjacent to De la Guerra Street. This would open up the connection between the Plaza and Casa de la Guerra as shown on Sheet 6 (Proposed Features Plan) in Attachment 2. The 2011 conceptual plan would also result in a reduced turf / lawn area. The existing lawn area is 37 % of the project area (17,332 SF). The proposed project would reduce the lawn/turf area to 23% of the project area (10,748 SF). The overall size of the Plaza lawn area is important to maintaining the historical integrity of the site and plays an important role in storm water management for the Plaza.

Drainage / Storm Water Capture – Trenching would be required for the utility corridor (4' in diameter; 4' deep) and for tree replacement (6' in diameter, 6' deep). The Plaza would be re-graded to incorporate best practice storm water capture and on-site retention. The existing storm drain in the roadway at the bottom of the U-Road in front of the News-Press building would remain and be subject to capacity analysis and ultimately upgraded. Please see Draft Hydrology Report prepared by Penfield and Smith (Attachment 6) and the Grading and Drainage Plan in Attachment 2, Sheet 4.

Construction Schedule and Work Force – If the conceptual plan were to be implemented it is estimated to require about 4 months for completion (refer to Attachment 2, Sheets 3 – 6). Demolition would require approximately 30 days; grading, 30 days; and construction and landscaping, 60 days. The work force on site during each of these phases could be: demolition 20 FTE; grading 20 FTE; and construction and landscaping 60 FTE. Machinery employed would include medium-duty diesel-powered demolition, excavation, hauling, grading and construction equipment. Staging could be on-site or possibly in a portion of the City Hall parking lot.

Discretionary Approvals Requested

We expect the project to undergo an extensive review and approval process as described in Attachment 3 (PRT Letter with Applicant Responses for DART Review).

Since the Plaza is City park land, the Parks and Recreation Commission will need to approve that the project is consistent with the P-R Zone. The Planning Commission will need to certify an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and design review approval by the Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) will be required.

Other Meetings / Input

Redevelopment Agency Staff and Doug Campbell, RDA's Landscape Architect, have held several meetings to obtain input on the conceptual plan. These have included representatives from groups that hold events in the Plaza, as well as representatives from the Downtown Organization and the Trust for Historic Preservation.

We expect that a concept review by the Historic Landmarks Commission (HLC) will follow shortly after the DART process.

Items Not Included in DART Submittal

Due to project timing, some items have not been included in this DART application. These are items that will be completed later in the process as described below.

Public Noticing – Given that the Planning Commission public hearings on this project are several months away, mailing labels have not been prepared for this DART application. A comprehensive public noticing list will be prepared to include area property owners, tenants, businesses, the Downtown Organization, the Trust for Historic Preservation and other interest groups. This list will be used for all future public hearings and meetings. The list will be most accurate and up to date if it is prepared closer to when the public meetings occur.

Draft Historic Structures / Sites Report – A Draft Historic Structures / Sites report has been prepared by Post Hazeltine. The findings of the report were instrumental in the project revisions that were made. Following acceptance of the Draft Hydrology Report (Attachment 6), a brainstorming meeting will be held with Creeks Staff, the project designers and Post Hazeltine to review materials for the project.

The Post Hazeltine Report has been reviewed by the Case Planner and Environmental Analyst. Their comments are being incorporated into the report along with updating the project description to match the 2011 concept design. HLC review of the Historic Structures Report has not yet occurred as the materials to be used to meet the City's Storm Water Requirements have yet to be fully resolved.

Draft Phase I Archeology Report – A Phase I Archeology Resources Report (ARR) has been prepared by Applied Earthworks and is available upon request. A total of eight shovel test pits (STPs) were manually excavated in the Plaza lawn area. Three of the test pits contained potentially significant archaeological deposits. The Case Planner and Environmental Analyst have reviewed a Draft ARR. Applied Earthworks is currently incorporating their comments and will submit a Final ARR within the week. Copies of the report are available upon request. The ARR has not yet been submitted to HLC for acceptance.

Preliminary Title Report – The DART Submittal Packet requests that applicants submit 2 copies of a current preliminary title report for all involved parcels. In 2010, the Redevelopment Agency hired MNS Engineers Inc. to research the land title records for the properties owned by the City of Santa Barbara within City Block No. 192 and the adjacent private properties.

The research included gathering copies of:

- Vesting deeds and related underlying documents for the 10-12 parcels that are owned by the City and associated with APN 037-092-037.
- Vesting deeds and related underlying documents for nine properties adjacent to the Plaza
- Easements in favor of the City over adjacent parcels
- Easements in favor of the adjacent parcels over the City property.

City Real Property Staff were involved in the scope and review of the MNS report. Copies of the report are available upon request.

8-1/2" by 11" Site Plan Reductions – After consultation with our Case Planner Kathy Kennedy, the site plan reductions are not being submitted at this time. They will be provided as needed for Planning Commission packet preparation.

Conclusion

We look forward to this application being deemed complete and initiating the environmental review process. If you have any questions, please call me at 564-5461 ext. 4586 or email elimon@santabarbaraca.gov.

Elizabeth Limón
Redevelopment Specialist

Attachments: **(Not attached. Available for review in the City Clerk's Office.)**

1. Site Conditions Photo
2. Plaza De la Guerra Infrastructure Improvements Project DART Design Plan Set - 9 pages including Title Sheet. (February 23, 2011)
3. PRT Letter with Applicant Responses for DART Review (February 23, 2011)
4. Responses to 2008 Engineering Division Comments (February 23, 2011)
5. Recent Project History (2007 – 2010)
6. Draft Hydrology Study (Penfield & Smith dated February 14, 2011)